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The New Indian Express wishes its readers a
Merry Christmas

BCCI TO COMPENSATE ICC FOR T20 WORLD CUP TAXES

If government doesn't grant exemption, world body to be paid by Indian board for event in India in Oct-Nov 2021

NOTHING IN AGM ABOUT GANGULY'S CONFLICT

BCCI's annual general meeting in Ahmedabad was silent on possible violations of conflict of interest rules by its president. Members who attended the meeting said this topic was not raised. Complaints have been filed before the BCCI's ethics officer, accusing Sourav Ganguly of flouting these rules. The ethics officer is yet to say anything about those.

MORE TEAMS IN IPL, TALK ON MORE VENUES

- The meeting approved the inclusion of two new IPL teams, which will take the total to 10, from the 2022 edition of the event
- There is a proposal to stage IPL matches in more cities. At present, cities the franchises represent host matches. The Covid situation will be considered before involving more venues | P13

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NATIONAL SELECTORS WERE SELECTED BY CRICKET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARWAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

With 6 hrs to go, govt says no night curfew

CM's Office says decision to withdraw order was taken based on views of advisory panel, officials

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

FROM no to yes, then a change, and no again. This is how the State Government wavered on its decisions over the last three days on imposing a night curfew across the state. The move was planned in the face of a threat of the spread of SARS-CoV-2's new variant.

The night curfew between 11 pm and 5 am, which was finally decided to be imposed from the night of December 24 to January 2 morning, was withdrawn just six hours before it was to come into effect.

According to an official announcement from the Chief Minister's Office, the Technical Advisory Committee's (TAC) views that a night curfew was not needed finally prevailed. Officials and cabinet ministers, too, concurred with the TAC, it said. On Tuesday evening, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa had categorically denied that there will be any night curfew or lockdown. But, on Wednesday morning, the decision suddenly changed to imposing a night curfew from 10pm to 6 am from Wednesday night itself until January 2. On Wednesday evening, another change came with the curfew to begin from Thursday with the timings reduced by two hours, between 11 pm and 5 am. The standard operating procedures (SOPs) and guidelines were issued and everything was set for the night curfew to take effect from 11 pm on Thursday when, around 5 pm, came the change of mind for the third time, withdrawing the night curfew order.

Yediyurappa said the decision to impose night curfew was made as the new strain of SARS-CoV-2 virus, that causes Covid-19, was detected in Britain and it was already spreading infection in other countries. In order to stop this from entering and spreading in Karnataka, a decision was taken to impose night curfew as per the TAC's recommendation. But now, the TAC said it is not needed, and therefore the decision has been withdrawn, he said. CONTINUED ON: P7

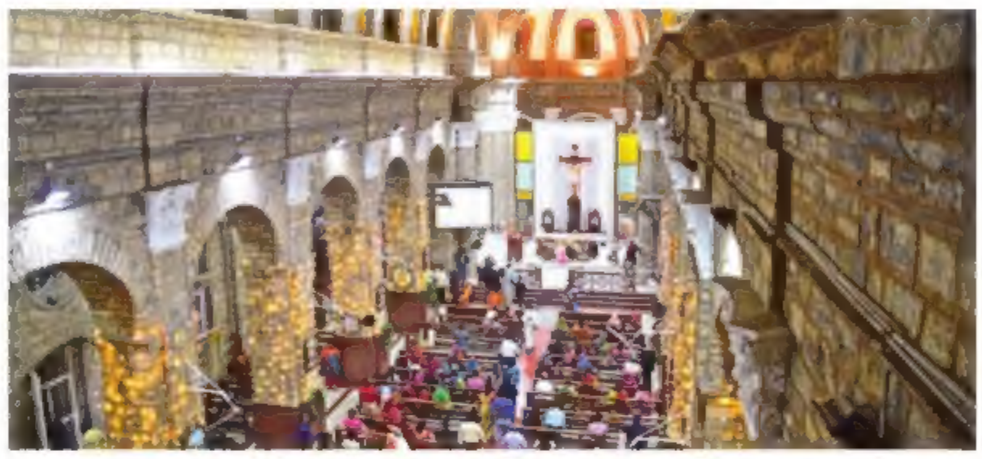
Swinging decisions

Dec 22
No night curfew

Dec 23 (Morning)
Night curfew from Wednesday 10 pm to 6 am

Dec 23 (evening)
Night curfew from Dec 24 to Jan 2 between 11 pm and 5 am

Dec 24
No night curfew



MUTED FESTIVITIES

Mass being held at the St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral in Bengaluru on the eve of Christmas on Thursday. The midnight mass was advanced to evening as the government had announced night curfew in Karnataka. The decision was, however, rolled back. The pandemic scare also contributed to the thin attendance | SHRIRAM BK | MORE PICS : P2

Struggling UK gets its X'mas gift in last-gasp post-Brexit trade deal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

AFTER months of acrimonious talks, the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU) finally reached a post-Brexit trade agreement on Thursday — just in time to avert New Year chaos for cross-border traders and eventually bringing a sense of certainty to businesses.

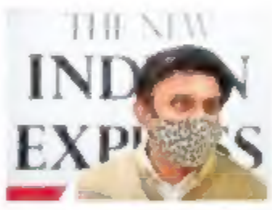
The pact also averts the much-feared "no-deal" scenario that would have sparked economic turmoil and disruption to the flow of goods and medicines.

The deal, which will complete Britain's separation from the EU, will now go to British PM Boris Johnson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen for approval. The breakthrough came four-and-a-half years after the UK voted to leave the EU.

The agreement was delayed because deliberations had been stuck for months after the two sides were unable to reach consensus on certain areas. Gradually, talks whittled down differences between the two sides to three key issues — fair-competition rules, mechanisms for resolving future disputes and fishing rights. The rights of EU boats to trawl in British waters remained the last obstacle before it was also resolved.

However, some aspects of the future relationship remain unresolved.

K'TAKA AIMS TO BE ON TOP IN PUBLIC HEALTHCARE



Health and Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar, who has been in the forefront of the battle against Covid-19, hopes for a "revolutionary health budget" in 2021. In many areas, the health infrastructure was found wanting during the pandemic. In the last three years, the budget allocation for health has never crossed 4 per cent. On Thursday, Sudhakar made a detailed presentation to the CM on upgrading facilities at primary and tertiary health centres with the aim of putting Karnataka on top in terms of public healthcare in the country. DETAILS | P4

Nothing new in fresh govt letter: Farmer unions

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi/Chandigarh

A day after protesting farmers ruled out any further talks until the government "draws up a new agenda", the Centre wrote to them again on Thursday, reiterating it was open to negotiation and requested farmers to suggest a date and time for a meeting.

In the letter, joint secretary in the Union agriculture ministry Vivek Agarwal, stated the government is still ready to discuss all existing issues with the farm unions with an "open mind".

"It is important for the government to have talks with all farmers' unions of the country. The government has been talking with unions under the Sanyukt Morcha with an open mind and also desires to talk with you in the future as per your convenience," stated the two-page letter.

Farmer unions, however, termed the letter a "delaying tactic". Bharatiya Kisan Union, Punjab (Lakowal) General Secretary Harinder Singh Lakowal said the unions will soon hold a meeting to discuss and prepare a reply.

"In today's letter again, the government is beating around the bush. Prime Minister Narendra Modi should call the protesting farmers with a concrete proposal but he is trying to find and talk to a select few farmers at Kutch in Gujarat," Lakowal said.

In its latest letter, which is in response to the farmers' reply on Wednesday seeking "a concrete proposal" from the government, the Centre highlighted that it has already given written assurances on all issues raised by the unions in past meetings. It reiterated that the three bills have nothing to do with the minimum support price (MSP) issue for procurement, but assured the farmers that the government will continue to procure crops on MSP.

As things stand now, the agitating farmers are unwilling to stand down from their core demand for a complete withdrawal of the three contentious farm laws and a legal guarantee from the Centre on MSP. P9

Rahul Gandhi with party leaders at the AICC headquarters in Delhi before leaving for Rashtrapati Bhawan on Thursday | SHEKHAR YADAV

No democracy in India: Rahul

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

CONGRESS leader Rahul Gandhi Thursday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying there is no democracy in the country and those speaking against the PM are labelled as terrorists.

A Congress delegation including Rahul, Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad and Leader of Congress in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury met President Ram Nath Kovind and submitted two crore signatures in support of the agitating farmers along with a memorandum seeking the repeal the three farm sector laws.

"There is no democracy... Anyone trying to take power from him will be dubbed as terrorist and anti-national, be it farmers, labourers or Mohan Bhagwat (RSS chief). He will make sure the wealth of people is transferred to crony capitalists. He will call people anti-nationals, terrorists to transfer the wealth of these people to three-four crony capitalists close to them," Rahul alleged after meeting Kovind.

"The government said that these laws are in favour of the farmers but the country is seeing that it is the farmers who are against these legislations. The farmers are in pain and also dying. The prime minister will have to listen to them. The way the agri laws were passed in the Monsoon session of Parliament in September, without any discussion and consultation, they need to be withdrawn," Rahul said.

Several Congress leaders, including party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, were detained as they were stopped from staging a protest march to Rashtrapti Bhavan.

10 unions boycott meet on framing labour code rules

New Delhi: Several trade and labour unions on Thursday boycotted a virtual meeting called by the Centre for tripartite consultation to frame rules for four labour codes, saying physical presence of all stakeholders is necessary for such an exercise. They also sought separate meetings to discuss each code threadbare. As for the RSS affiliate Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), it participated in the meeting and demanded that the new wage definition, limiting allowances at 50% of the total salary, should not be frozen. P10

PANDEMIC HEAT

It's down to a trickle at major temples

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

Even the Gods have not been spared. The state-managed temples in Karnataka, which include some of the richest ones in the country, have seen their revenues plummet this year, courtesy the Covid-19 pandemic. The top 12 temples in the state, which together had collected Rs 317 crore last year, have seen earnings of only Rs 18.6 crore so far.

Consider this. The famous Kukke Subramanya temple in Dakshina Kannada district, whose annual revenue is over Rs

90 crore, has managed only Rs 4.2 crore in revenue this year. The Kollur Mookambika temple in Udupi district, which sees revenue of Rs 45-50 crore every year, got only Rs 4.5 crore. This is for the first time that these temples received the lowest revenue.

The Chamundeshwari temple atop Chamundi Hills in Mysuru, whose earnings last year was Rs 35.23 crore, has been able to collect only Rs 74 lakh this year. The Srikanteshwara temple at Nanjangud near Mysuru, considered the Kashi of the South, could generate only Rs 12.6 lakh revenue as against Rs 20.8 crore last year.

There are 34,559 temples under the Endowment Department in the state. CONTINUED ON: P4

EXPRESS READ

India challenges Voda arbitration ruling

New Delhi: India has challenged the September 25 ruling of a Singapore-based international arbitration tribunal that junked its ₹22,100 cr retrospective tax demand on Vodafone. The appeal was filed days before the 90-day deadline to do so. The government had used a 2012 law that gave tax authorities the power to reopen past cases to seek taxes over alleged capital gains made several years ago. | P12

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